

Message Text

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PAGE 01 JIDDA 06022 301829Z

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 AF-06 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07

L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06

EB-07 SCA-01 DHA-02 DIWY-01 SAM-01 (ISO) W

----- 036938

R 301420Z AUG 75

FM AMEMBASSY JIDDA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2280

INFO AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI

AMEMBASSY ALGIERS

AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMCONSUL DHAHRAN

AMEMBASSY DOHA

AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

AMEMBASSY MANAMA

RUQN

I/AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO 193

AMEMBASSY MUSCAT

AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT

AMEMBASSY PRETORIA

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BEIRUT PASS USINT BAGHDAD

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: BGEN, SA

SUBJECT: REQUIREMENTS RE DOMESTIC HIRING BY FIRMS FOR EMPLOYMENT

ABROAD - IMPACT ON QUALIFICATION OF FIRMS TO OBTAIN USG CONTRACTS

UNDER E.O. 11246

REF: STATE 194260

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PAGE 02 JIDDA 06022 301829Z

SUMMARY: SAUDI VISA AND EMPLOYMENT POLICY IS DISCRIMINATORY TO BOTH WOMEN AND JEWS. EMBASSY HAS SEEN SIGNS, HOWEVER, THAT POLICY IS BEING RELAXED, AND BELIEVES THAT STEADY, TACTFUL PRESSURE CAN POINT OUT THAT FURTHER RELAXATION IS IN THE INTEREST OF THE SAUDI GOVERNMENT. AO URT PRESSURE WAMANDING CHANGE WILL, HOWEVER, ONLY RESULT IN STIFFENING SAUDI RESISTANCE TO CHANGE. END SUMMARRJ

1. SAUDI ARABIAN POLICY ON VISA ISSUANCE AND WORK PRACTICES ARE BY NO MEANS AS UNCONSTRAINED AS WE COULD WISH. IN PARTICULAR, THE SAUDI GOVERNMENT APPLIES SERIOUS AND COMPREHENSIVE RESTRICTIONS ON EMPLOYMENT OF WOMEN. ACCORDING TO THE SAUDI LABOR LAW WOMEN ARE ONLY FORBIDDEN TO WORK IN A SITUATION WHERE THEY WOULD BE REQUIRED TO "COMMINGLE" WITH MALES, OR WHERE WORKING CONDITIONS WERE NOT OF A CERTAIN STANDARD. IN PRACTICE, WOMEN ARE NOT ISSUED WORK VISAS, AND ARE NOT ALLOWED TO DRIVE ANY FORM OF VEHICLE.

2. THE EMBASSY HAS OFTEN DISCUSSED THE POSITION OF WOMEN IN THIS SOCIETY BOTH FROM HUMANITARIAN AND MAN-POWER CONSIDERATIONS. THE SAUDIS HAVE ANSWERED THAT THE POSITION OF WOMEN IS REGULATED BY THE ORGANIZATION OF SAUDI RELIGION AND SOCIETY. NEVERTHELESS, WE HAVE SEEN FREQUENT SIGNS OF EASING IN RECENT MONTHS.

ONE AMERICAN

FIRM NOT ONLY HIRES 35 SAUDI WOMEN (REGISTERED WITH THE SOCIAL INSURANCE SYSTEM), BUT HAS IMPORTED SEVERAL HUNDRED SINGLE WOMEN AND A GOOD MANY MARRIED WOMEN (EVEN SOME WHO DON'T WORK) ON WORK VISAS. THE GOVERNMENT IS NOW ALMOST TURNING A BLIND EYE ON FOREIGN FIRMS WHO EMPLOY FEMALES (MOSTLY FOREIGN).

3. EMBASSY DOES NOT BELIEVE IT WOULD BE USEFUL TO PRESS FOR EASING OF RESTRICTIONS ON WOMEN. THE SAUDIS ARE VERY SENSITIVE ON THE ISSUE, AND, IN ANY CASE, THE DRASTIC SHORTAGES OF MANPOWER WHICH THREATEN THE KINGDOM'S DEVELOPMENT PLANS, WILL HAVE FAR MORE PERSUASIVE POWER THAN ANY EMBASSY DEMARCHES.

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PAGE 03 JIDDA 06022 301829Z

4. IT IS ALSO TRUE THAT SAUDIS OFTEN REFUSE VISAS TO INDIVIDUALS WHO ARE APPARENTLY OF JEWISH ORIGIN. IN A MEETING EARLIER THIS YEAR THE LATE KING FAISAL EXPLAINED TO A VISITING GROUP OF U.S. CONGRESSMEN THAT: "AMERICAN JEWS ARE STAUNCH SUPPORTERS OF ISRAEL; SAUDI ARABIA IS AT WAR WITH ISRAEL," THEREFORE SAUDI ARABIA WILL CONTINUE TO DENY VISAS TO U.S. JEWS AS A MATTER OF

POLICY.

5. IN GENERAL, THE POLICY IS AGGREGED. IN SPECIFICS, HOWEVER, WE ARE AWARE OF MANY INSTANCES OF JEWS WHO HAVE APPLIED FOR AND RECEIVED VISAS TO SAUDI ARABIA. THEY INCLUDE JOURNALISTS (JOSEPH KRAFT, SEYMOUR TOPPING, CY SULZBERGER), BUSINESSMEN AND SCIENTISTS (KIP SEIGEL OF KMS FUSION). A LOCAL U.S. TRAINED DOCTOR RECENTLY TOLD DCM THAT TWO OF HIS MEDICAL SCHOOL PROFESSORS -- BOTH JEWISH--HAD COME TO SAUDI ARABIA TO ADVISE THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH. SAUDIS SAY THAT THE BASIS FOR THE EXCLUSION OF JEWS IS NOT RELIGIOUS, BUT IS THE PRESUMPTION OF THEIR POLITICAL HOSTILITY. THEY POINT OUT THAT IN JULY DR. ALFRED LILIENTHAL CAME TO SAUDI ARABIA AS THE OFFICIAL GUEST OF THE SAUDI ARABIAN GOVERNMENT.

6. THE EMBASSY HAS ON MANY OCCASIONS REVIEWED THE PROBLEM WITH APPROPRIATE SAUDI OFFICIALS BUT DOES NOT PLAN A SUDDEN INCREASE IN OVERT PRESSURE ON THE SAG. OVERT PRESSURE, IN OUR EXPERIENCE, WILL STIFFEN SAUDI RESISTANCE. ON THE OTHER HAND WE WILL CONTINUE TO APPLY THE SAME STEADY, TACTFUL PRESSURE WHICH HAS BEEN APPLIED SINCE AMBASSADOR AKINS' ARRIVAL AT POST. WE HAVE EVERY REASON TO BELIEVE, AS SAUDI BUSINESS CONTACTS WITH THE WEST MULTIPLY, THAT IT IS IN THE SAUDI INTEREST TO ALLOW A RELAXATION OF VISA POLICY. WE THINK THEY WILL RECOGNIZE THEIR INTERESTS AND ACT ACCORDINGLY, BUT SUCH A CHANGE WILL NOT COME OVERNIGHT.
AKINS

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